

International Social Work Student Exchange: Facilitating good practice in Australia and Asia Pacific

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Abstract

Within the discipline of social work, internationalisation has been the subject of significant debate for at least two decades, with increasing importance placed on developing global perspectives. The impact of globalising forces on social welfare services accentuates the importance of preparing social work graduates for practice in complex, intercultural local and global contexts as part of the 21st century student experience. Enhancing student learning and competence in the international and intercultural dimensions of social work practice has been in part achieved through the development of international student exchanges and international field placements in many Schools of Social Work in Australia. Anecdotally, there is significant diversity in the ways in which such international placements and exchanges are planned, prepared for and implemented. However, there is little concrete information or data on the ways in which Australian social work education providers are handling these activities or what might constitute good practice in this area.

This presentation describes the aims, background and design of a major research project, recently funded by the Australian Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT). The project, led by researchers at James Cook University in collaboration with Australian and international partners, aims to document, analyse, develop and disseminate exemplary practices in international social work student exchange, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific. The project will draw on data from Australian social work education providers and their international partners, to document and analyse current practices. Merging this data with a critical literature review, the project will develop guidelines to embed improved practice in international student exchange into national social work curricula. It is anticipated that the project will make substantial contributions to the development of mutually beneficial international student exchange programs and support Australian social work educators in integrating evidence-led good practice principles into core curricula.